



women and work  
all party parliamentary group

# Making the Industrial Strategy work for women

## Annual Report 2017



This report was researched by Connect and funded by Centrica, IPSE, NatWest, Shaw Trust and the University of Sussex. This is not an official publication of the House of Commons or House of Lords. It has not been approved by either House or its committees. All-Party Parliamentary Groups are informal groups of members of both Houses with a common interest in particular issues. The views expressed in this report are those of the Group.



# Introduction

The Women and Work All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) is a cross-party group that constructively examines the role of women in the workforce, making recommendations to Government on delivering gender balance within the UK economy.

In January 2017, the *Building our Industrial Strategy* Green Paper set out the Government's aim to build a policy which would address long-term challenges to the UK economy. However, it did not address issues relating to gender inequality in the workplace.

Through our programme of meetings over the course of the year we have heard evidence from a range of stakeholders about how the Industrial Strategy could work better for women. Themes included sector-based gender segregation, diversifying gender roles, disability and gender in the workplace, automation and technology, education and enterprise, and the 'gig' economy.

In November 2017, when the Government introduced its *Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain Fit for the Future* White Paper, we were pleased to see several direct references to supporting women and other under-represented groups to participate more fully in the labour market. However, more needs to be done.

We hope that these recommendations will help to ensure that women are seen and heard when the Government and employers implement the policies outlined in the Industrial Strategy in the months and years ahead.

We would like to thank Flick Drummond, who co-chaired the Women and Work APPG from January 2016 to June 2017 and launched this inquiry. We are very grateful for her input and her continued support for the work of the APPG.



**Gillian Keegan MP**  
**Co-Chair**



**Jess Phillips MP**  
**Co-Chair**



# Recommendations

This report outlines the conclusions drawn from the APPG's 2017 programme of meetings and our open call for evidence. We make six key recommendations drawn from contributions from politicians, employers, businesses and other key stakeholders.

Our key recommendations are:

- Government should issue guidance to help early years practitioners and primary school teachers to encourage girls to express their interests where they fall outside of traditional gender stereotypes, and to tackle girls' perceptions that they lack the ability to study STEM subjects.
- Government should ensure that parents are financially rewarded when opting for Shared Parental Leave to send a clear signal about the role that both sexes play in bringing up children. All mothers should have access to Statutory Maternity Pay, including self-employed women.
- The new National Retraining Scheme announced in the Autumn 2017 Budget should have a clear focus on upskilling the female workforce with in-demand skills, for example digital literacy, and have a specific focus on skills development for disabled women.
- The Careers and Enterprise Company should define what a "meaningful encounter" with an employer during a young person's education means by the end of 2018. Meaningful encounters should include opportunities to meet entrepreneurs, university staff, self-employed women and women role models working in sectors where women are under-represented.
- Online platforms that support self-employed people, including digital platforms, should do more to support the people that work for them to undertake relevant training at work.
- A Life Skills module, encompassing information on digital skills and entrepreneurship, should be embedded in the national curriculum at key stage 3 or 4.



# Women in under-represented sectors



***“The gender disparity in the engineering sector is perpetuated by social stereotypes which mark out some behaviours as ‘boyish’ and some as ‘girlish’”.***

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In the first meeting of 2017, the APPG heard evidence about improving the representation of women in sectors traditionally dominated by men.

Dr Sarah Peers, Vice-President of the Women's Engineering Society outlined the challenges of under-representation of women in the engineering, digital tech and construction sectors. This is not a global problem - 30% of engineering students in India are female, but the UK is the bottom of the EU league in terms of diversity in engineering. One key challenge employers face is the lack of a pipeline of women. Three out of four students say that they want to go into industry, but this does not translate into jobs. There is also a drop-off of women not returning to work after a career break. By the time a female engineer reaches the age of 45 she is more likely than not to have left the engineering field.

Heather Melville, Director for Strategic Partnerships and Head of Business Inclusion Initiatives at NatWest told us about her own personal background that led her into a career as a "*disruptive legend*" within the banking sector. She explained that NatWest have set up a Women's Network to develop and retain female talent. NatWest has made ambitious commitments on women in

the workplace because it makes good business sense. Heather also told us that it is important to recognise the role of men as change-makers.

Kath Moore of Women into Construction told us that the UK is facing the worst shortage in construction skills since 1998. 73% of companies report that the shortage of suitably skilled site operatives is having an impact on their activities.

Caroline Flint MP, Vice-Chair of the APPG, suggested that Government should introduce targets for female apprentices, as they have for BME apprentices.

Girlguiding told us that many girls take on board stereotypes about women in under-represented sectors, saying that in 2012, 62% of girls said they regarded engineering as "*more for men*". In 2016, 76% of girls aged 7-10 said they felt encouraged when they see a woman doing a job they want to do.

The Government's Careers Strategy, which was published in December 2017, includes some positive steps. However, the definition of a "*meaningful encounter*", designed to help young people build their understanding of workplaces and employment, should be clarified as soon as possible.

# Case study

## Natalie Foster



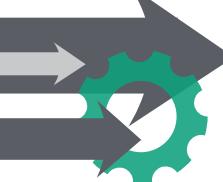
British Gas engineer Natalie Foster, 34, completed her A-Levels and first tried university before going into the hospitality industry and making a career as a bar manager.

Natalie always wanted to do something she could feel proud of and which makes people happy, not just stare at a computer all day. The British Gas apprenticeship really appealed to her.

Natalie undertook her apprenticeship at the British Gas Academy in Dartford, Kent, just 15 miles from her home town of Orpington. Reflecting on her time there, she told us "*the course was just as challenging, interesting and rewarding as I had hoped and I'm now fully qualified, working as an engineer around my hometown.*"

*"Being an engineer, it is a largely male environment and I was a little apprehensive going in. I was the only woman in my class on the course, but I found that I fitted in perfectly. It's the same today; I get on well with the rest of the engineers and even the customers who are a bit surprised on initially seeing me on their doorstep are so welcoming!"*

Natalie is keen to see more women in STEM. She told us "*the whole experience was very liberating, as back in school I remember being steered away from the science and technology subjects because I was a girl. I think times have changed since then and people have realised that there's absolutely no reason that women can't do technical jobs. Personally, I love to see women on television or in the media in very practical roles and I'd love to inspire young women not to be afraid to follow their passions, even if it takes them into a traditionally male-dominated field.*"



# Changing the role of men

**“Only 5% of new fathers and 8% of new mothers have taken up Shared Parental Leave since it was introduced.”**

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At the second meeting of 2017, the APPG heard evidence on the impact of traditional gender roles and how to diversify gender roles both at home and in the workplace.

The panel and the audience agreed that misconceptions of gender roles mean that women often feel they are shut out of certain sectors, face unfair discrimination, or must juggle caring commitments alongside their work. It is too often assumed that women are responsible for childcare, and men who take on responsibility for this are frequently stigmatised. To tackle this, it is just as important to look at the roles of men at home and in the workplace as it is to look at the role of women.

Carol Frost, Director of Human Resources at Centrica told us that employers need to act to change the traditional perceptions of gender roles. Carol believes that her workforce should represent her customer base and Centrica is working to discover patterns of behaviour and help people recognise unconscious bias. Centrica are also trialling a reverse mentoring scheme, which sees members of the leadership team being mentored by junior staff from across the business, specifically aimed at increasing diversity and gender parity.

Jamie Leith, Co-Founder of education and childcare agency Manny & Me emphasised the importance of positive role models for young children, stating that when children are exposed to only one gender at a young age it can create a lasting impression. He encouraged innovative thinking to find ways to encourage families to diversify gender roles at home.

It was suggested that business should actively support families by helping to bring children into the workplace, for example by supporting creches or holiday clubs at work. Audience members also felt that men should be specifically targeted to get them into female-dominated industries, such as childcare and early education. It is important to break the stigma, for both genders, and change social attitudes by openly discussing issues and sharing experiences.

The panel felt that improving the affordability of Shared Parental Leave would help to create this change, by encouraging more men to stay at home and take on a caring role. One proposal was for Shared Parental Leave to be paid at a greater rate than Statutory Maternity Leave, or for men to receive a bonus for taking parental leave. This has been successfully implemented in Iceland.



## Case study

# Professor Alison Phipps

The University of Sussex has recently appointed Professor Alison Phipps to a professorship as a part-time worker. While it is relatively unusual for a part-time academic to gain a professorship, it is not without precedent at Sussex.

Alison has worked at Sussex for nearly 12 years and has spent half that time working part-time after having and co-parenting two children. Since 2015, she has worked four days a week. In the three years before that, she worked three days a week.

In her role as Professor of Gender Studies, which is one of the university's most important interdisciplinary areas of teaching and research, Alison teaches a gender-based portfolio of both undergraduate and postgraduate courses and is one of the UK's leading academics on the topic of gender equality.

She works as part of the NUS National Strategy Team for tackling 'lad culture' in higher education and sits on the advisory board of the 1752 Group, the UK's first lobby group on sexual misconduct towards students by staff. She advises Universities UK on violence against women, harassment and hate crime and sits on Brighton & Hove City Council's Violence Against Women and Girls Programme Board as well as working on collaborative projects with rape crisis service Survivors' Network.



# Disability and gender in the workplace



***“At the current rate of progress it will take over 200 years to bridge the disability employment gap.”***

**Shaw Trust**

In her evidence to the APPG, Clare Gray, Disability Advocacy Advisor at Shaw Trust told us that the Industrial Strategy Green Paper did not mention disabled people at all and that a more inclusive approach is needed to bring under-represented people into the Industrial Strategy. The Industrial Strategy White Paper does however propose measures to improve accessibility for disabled people, such as access to apprenticeships, and aims to “see one million more disabled people in employment in the UK by 2027”.

Young disabled people are less likely than any other group to transition from school to work and gain qualifications to gain successful careers: working-age disabled people are three times more likely to hold no qualifications than non-disabled people, and there is a very low number of disabled people accessing apprenticeships.

Clare told us it is important for employers to put out positive messages on what they are doing to support disabled employees and candidates. It is important to show that they want to employ more disabled people.

Shaw Trust told us that a significant barrier to apprenticeships is the current minimum wage of £3.50 per hour. They believe this wage is unsustainable for disabled women with children and in helping with the cost of being disabled.

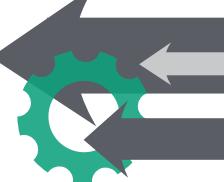
The APPG also heard about the need for accessible and affordable homes. Habinteg and the Papworth Trust say that 580,000 disabled people of working age have an accessible housing need and that disabled people living in inaccessible homes are four times more likely to be unemployed.

The APPG heard that women are more likely to be sectioned under the Mental Health Act than men, and once sectioned people are unable to access a whole range of jobs. The APPG also heard that deaf students leave school with worse GCSE grades than non-deaf students, which limits their access to apprenticeships.

Professor Claire Annesley, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Equalities and Diversity at the University of Sussex told us that universities have to do more to broaden access. Claire said the University of Sussex have identified 2018 as their Year for Accessibility, establishing a permanent Staff Disability Network and a taskforce to identify and address the most significant barriers to accessibility on campus.

A very small percentage of people are born with a disability. Due to the UK's ageing population, the number of disabled people is going to triple in the future. Improved accessibility to employment can benefit everyone.

# Automation and the impact on female employment



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**“Automation threatens groups who are already at a disadvantage. We need a more holistic approach to diversity and inclusion – incorporating gender, age, race and disability.” Royal Academy of Engineering**

The APPG held a meeting to look at the specific impact of automation and technological advances on women and how this could be addressed by the Industrial Strategy.

Giving evidence to the APPG, Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Debbie Abrahams MP, discussed the increasing flexibility of the labour market. She said that automation and technological advances disproportionately affect women, as companies offer lower-skilled jobs and more men are employed at senior levels than women.

Upskilling and the need to embed digital skills in the education and employment system was discussed by several attendees including Dr Hayaatun Sillem, Deputy CEO and Director of Strategy at the Royal Academy of Engineering. She highlighted the changing nature of work as an opportunity to change the diversity of the workforce. Jess Phillips MP gave the example of a shelf stacking job that might be replaced by a robot, where the employee could then be upskilled to fix the robot.

Amy Thomson, Founder of Seen and Co-Founder of Future Girl Corp told us about her experience setting up her own agency, saying she found a lot of people are afraid of technology but it should be harnessed to improve employment and job flexibility.

Gillian Keegan MP said careers advice should be improved to keep up with the pace of change in the modern workforce, going beyond the traditional options. Jess Phillips MP emphasised that parents need to be aware of the diversity of different jobs and skills to provide valuable careers advice to their children.

The meeting stressed the need to take advantage of technology in the workplace to address historic injustices of the labour market. Suggestions to achieve this included focusing on using contracts and procurement as a lever to make change, and shortening the working week to drive up productivity.



# Gig work and disruptive industries



***“As the gig economy grows, public policy needs to adapt to ensure self-employment remains a positive choice, striking the right balance between flexibility and fairness.”***

**IPSE**

The APPG heard evidence on the benefits and challenges of the growing 'gig economy' for women. Gillian Keegan MP outlined some of the benefits that working in the gig economy can bring for women, including flexibility, facilitated independence, and lower marketing costs. This can be particularly attractive to working mothers. However, female workers in the gig economy dominate sectors like domestic and care work, perpetuating gender segregation.

Professor Maria Savona, Professor of Innovation and Evolutionary Economics at the University of Sussex highlighted some areas of concern around conditions of workers in the gig economy, including the precarious and fragmented nature of jobs relying on digital platforms.

Imogen Farhan, Public Policy and External Affairs Assistant at IPSE told us there are 1.5 million self-employed women in the UK, representing an important structural shift in the UK labour market. However, there are issues with workplace rights for the self-employed. She said that policy needs to catch up with the reality of the labour market. For example, self-employed women may be eligible for Maternity Allowance, not Statutory Maternity Pay meaning that they will receive a lot less than an employee.

Abigail Hunt, Research Fellow at the Overseas Development Institute, said many of the challenges and discriminations that already exist in the economy are replicated in the gig economy where women are often concentrated in domestic work. She told us there needs to be a focus on extending the benefits of good working conditions to these workers. Evidence submitted to the APPG from Bright Blue highlighted how expectant mothers who are casual workers or zero-hours workers do not currently have the right to paid leave to attend antenatal appointments with a healthcare professional.

The panel and audience agreed that it is important to strike a balance in policy between ensuring a good enabling environment and regulating this area of work. Policy makers should not be entirely focused on the well-known cases of Uber and Deliveroo, but should have a different dialogue which considers the positive cases as well. The panel emphasised the importance of focusing on skilling and upskilling. One suggestion put to the APPG was to make training for new skills tax deductible for the self-employed, as it is for employees. Levelling the playing field would improve the resilience of the UK economy.





# Education and enterprise

**“Self-employment has now grown to represent around 15% of the total workforce. 58% of the newly self-employed have been women. One in seven freelancers are now mums.”**

IPSE

At the final meeting of 2017, the APPG heard evidence on education and enterprise, specifically around whether schools should be doing more to promote female entrepreneurship.

Panellists included Education Select Committee member, Trudy Harrison MP and Lydia Wakefield, Education and Training Manager at IPSE.

The panel and the audience suggested that schools should embed entrepreneurship in the curriculum, and provide better quality careers advice that gives a proper understanding of what it means to be self-employed and an entrepreneur.

The panel suggested that schools should receive credit for students that undertake vocational skills or apprenticeships, similarly businesses and entrepreneurs should be incentivised to go into education institutions to give careers advice, including enterprise skills. These could help dispel some of the ‘dragons

den’ myths around entrepreneurship, and encourage women and men to use their skill set – academic or not – to set up their own business.

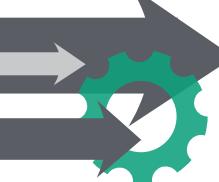
Lydia Wakefield told us about the growing trend of self-employed and freelancing mothers. She said that high quality, accessible and flexible childcare is key to supporting female entrepreneurship: making it easier for self-employed mothers will create capacity for female entrepreneurs to go into schools and take part in mentoring schemes, and in turn educate and inspire more women to consider self-employment.

Gillian Keegan MP said that there should be a general focus on upskilling, and that enterprise skills should be encouraged throughout a person’s life: at school, in higher education, through apprenticeships and in families. Evidence received by the APPG also highlights the importance of work experience, which has been shown to address the barriers of low productivity and stagnant wages.

**“Appropriate enterprise training has been shown to double women’s chances of starting a business, and triple their levels of confidence in their abilities.”**

IPSE





# The Women and Work APPG is sponsored by

## centrica

At Centrica, we strongly believe that diversity within a workforce leads to a successful organisation, and we're keen to ensure our culture and working practices are fit for purpose to attract and retain the best talent, both male and female. We are proud to support the APPG's commitment to gender equality in the workplace.

## Shaw Trust

Shaw Trust is a national employment, learning and skills charity working towards building a society in which everyone has the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential in the workplace. We provide employment opportunities, skills development training and health and well-being services across the UK. Gender equality is an important part of realising workplace diversity.

## ipse

IPSE, the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-employed, represents the UK's 4.8 million self-employed people. Women are the majority of the new self-employed, and now account for over one-third of the UK's rising self-employed population.

## US UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

The University of Sussex is committed to both equality and driving change in the workplace to create opportunities for all to succeed. We want to ensure our female students and staff can thrive in their careers without barriers to study and employment.

## NatWest

More than half the population of the UK is female but only 20% of businesses are owned by women. We are determined to help female business owners by making available to them our reach, expertise, knowledge, buildings and infrastructure, finance, mentoring, and connectivity.

# Looking ahead



**In 2018, the Women and Work APPG programme will look in depth at how to recruit women for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

The APPG has heard from witnesses about the ways in which employers sometimes struggle to attract and recruit women. This issue in particular was highlighted at our party conference fringe events, supported by the University of Sussex, where speakers and attendees agreed that functional and fair recruitment is key to closing the gender pay gap and to the UK economy.

The recruitment process is vital to ensuring fair access to jobs and tackling gender challenges in the labour market, at all levels and across all sectors. Issues such as gender segregation, unconscious bias and discrimination continue to have an impact on female recruitment.

To explore recruitment processes in detail, the Women and Work APPG will hold a series of meetings analysing the recruitment process from start to finish. At the end of the year, the Group will publish a report with recommendations for employers, Government and women themselves.



# women and work

## all party parliamentary group

The officers of the Women and Work APPG are:

**Co-Chairs:**

Gillian Keegan MP  
Jess Phillips MP

**Vice-Chairs:**

Caroline Flint MP  
Baroness Prosser  
Baroness Uddin  
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